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Agent: FBI tailed Portland anarchists headed to May Day riot

By [Levi Pulkkinen](#), SeattlePI Updated 4:39 pm PDT, Thursday, October 18, 2012



IMAGE 1 OF 117

Officers arrest a man that threw a glass jar and hit an officer in his face shield during a May Day rally on Tuesday, May 1, 2012 in downtown Seattle. The rally turned violent when black-clad protesters smashed

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As the investigation into the May Day riot continues, recently unsealed court documents show the FBI's interest in several suspects predated the political vandalism that swept downtown Seattle.

Asking for permission to search electronics seized at several Portland "squats," an FBI special agent outlined the allegations against six Portland anarchists suspected of traveling to Seattle for the May 1 demonstration.

Portland residents were among the 50 or so black-clad protesters who smashed windows, clashed

with police and attacked members of the media around downtown Seattle during the demonstration. An FBI surveillance team apparently followed the group north from Portland; investigators claim to have recovered text messages tying them to the violence.

According to the special agent's statement, which was filed in U.S. District Court at Seattle and unsealed Thursday, five of the six protestors are suspected of damaging the William Kenzo Nakamura Courthouse during the May Day demonstrations. They were joined in the vandalism by seven other anarchists and several unaffiliated demonstrators.

Writing the court, the FBI agent suggested the protesters came to Seattle to destroy property.

"Although many anarchists are law-abiding, there is a history in the Pacific Northwest of some anarchists participating in property destruction and other criminal activity in support of their political philosophy," said the agent, who is assigned to the FBI Seattle office's terrorism task force.

The agent went on to name six Oregon residents suspected in the vandalism. All are anarchists known to Portland-area law enforcement; the FBI agent contends text messages and surveillance show they traveled to Seattle for the protest, and, in one case, described the day as "awesome."

None of the suspects identified in the recently unsealed search warrant have been charged publicly in the May Day vandalism. Seattlepi.com does not generally name suspects prior to charges being filed.

Well-publicized inquiries are currently before grand juries in Seattle and Portland, but no indictments against these suspects have been made public as yet.

Writing the court, the FBI agent contended Portland police have recovered clothing

seen during the protests during the search of a residence associated with several of the suspects.

An FBI surveillance team followed five of the suspects north from Portland when they drove to Olympia the day before the May 1 riots, the FBI agent told the court. The surveillance team broke off after the group arrived in Olympia but text messages recovered by the FBI and rental car receipts indicate they arrived in Seattle the morning of May 1.

Requesting a warrant to examine 25 devices seized by investigators, the special agent asserted several vandals are suspected of destroying government property, crossing state lines to riot and conspiring to commit the same crimes.

Aware that some anarchists were preparing for "direct actions," police and federal officers prepared for vandalism around downtown Seattle, the agent told the court. In the riot that followed, a group of about 50 protesters dressed in black damaged banks, retail outlets and the Nakamura Courthouse, while also attacking police and members of the media.

Investigators contend 12 people dressed in black – what investigators describe as "black bloc" uniform – vandalized the courthouse, causing tens of thousands of dollars in damage. According to the FBI report, a vandal threw an incendiary device similar to a road flare at the courthouse.

Describing the vandals as "clearly coordinated," the agent told the court a wave of black-clad rioters would attack the building, then retreat to make way for another wave. While they were doing so, two other protesters unaffiliated with the anarchist group joined the destruction.

Having identified the Oregon suspects, investigators in Portland searched a Mississippi Avenue "squat" where several were believed to be living. The search was conducted as part of an investigation into vandalism of a Portland Key Bank in which one of the men is accused.

Text messages recovered in that search purportedly show the group planned to participate in a riot. They also show the protesters working out some basic logistics.

"I only cut the shirt in half becuse its not big enough," one suspect wrote. "If you can figure out two slightly small bandanas out of it, thatd be great."

In subsequent searches, investigators recovered other clothing they contend links the suspects to the vandalism. Investigators also seized 14 pieces of electronics and 11 CDs, which they've now thoroughly searched.

The search warrant was issued Oct. 3 by U.S. Magistrate Judge Mary Alice Theiler. The affidavit and warrant were unsealed Thursday.

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